



St. Helens Council

Bereavement Services

Guide to Personalised Burials in St Helens

Introduction

Many families know little about funerals having been touched for the first time by their loss, they are not clear as to whether they intend to use a funeral director or make arrangements themselves. Other requests are about making funerals less formal and more of a celebration of the life of the deceased, or about being more natural and green.

In response to these requests, the enclosed notes set out the routine followed by a funeral director using our services, to which matters of interest to all the bereaved are added. This, it is hoped will help the bereaved understand their rights and complete as little or as much of the funeral arrangements as they wish, even to carrying out the funeral without a funeral director.

The completion of these notes is intended to widen choice and help the bereaved and others obtain a meaningful funeral. St Helens Council does not wish to promote any particular type of arrangement or choice and it is hoped that these notes do not imply this. St Helens Bereavement Services does not provide a funeral directing service and cannot collect bodies and convey them to the cemeteries/crematorium that they operate.

Choosing a Funeral Director

Funerals can be arranged from anywhere in the country without difficulty, although the distance can increase costs. If you use a funeral director, you can choose one from your locality or alternatively from elsewhere. Some funeral directors are members of the National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) and have a Code of Practice. Under this code, they should offer you a price list at your request.

Our Location

The Bereavement Services office is based within the crematorium building and you can make your funeral arrangements there either by calling in or by telephone, the address and telephone number is as follows:

St Helens Cemetery/Crematorium
Rainford Road
St Helens
Merseyside
WA10 6DF
Tel: 01744 677406/7

Provisional Booking of the Funeral

You can contact us by telephone on the above number during office hours:
Monday - Friday 9.00am - 4.30pm

Please state that you require a burial booking. You must also inform the office at this stage whether you require use of the Crematorium Chapel for the service. This provisional booking ensures that a day and time is reserved for your funeral arrangements and so all other aspects can now be organised.

You can arrange a burial service Monday to Friday at the following times:

Monday - Thursday 9.00am - 2.30pm
Friday 9.00am - 2.00pm

Saturday funerals can be accommodated when necessary at an additional cost.

The funeral will then be provisionally booked and we will require the following information over the telephone:

Funeral location - St Helens Cemetery, Rainford Road, St Helens
 Newton-le-Willows Cemetery, Park Road South, Newton-le-Willows

Funeral date and time - this will be when the funeral will arrive at the cemetery. A member of staff will be waiting to supervise your funeral.

We will normally require a minimum of 3 days notice in order to get the grave excavated and ready; this also allows the administration work to be done in the office.

Details of deceased - we require the name of the deceased

Funeral type - this will depend upon how your funeral is organised. If you have a service elsewhere than the cemetery, you will simply go directly to the grave when you arrive. The grave will be prepared and you will be met by a Bereavement Services Funeral Attendant and then have a committal service or any such service as you require. If you prefer to have a service at the cemetery you can use the crematorium chapel for a 25-minute service

We are sympathetic to all cultural, religious and non-religious services to be held in our chapel or at the graveside. If you require any further details or are not sure what you can do please telephone the office. There are no legal restrictions to the use of the chapel as long as the service is not offensive to other mourners, then the service may be personalised to meet the need of the family and mourners.

Person arranging funeral - we require the name, address and telephone number of this person who can be a family member or funeral director, who must also pay the fees required. A list of fees is available upon request.

Grave number - if you already have a grave, the number is on your deed. You need to say who is already buried in the grave, which the office will confirm. They will also check to see if there is sufficient space for another burial.

If a new grave is required it will be necessary to state the maximum number of burials required. The graves in our cemeteries are lawn type graves.

Coffin size - you may not know these details at this early stage. If not, you will need to notify us so that we can assure the grave is dug to the correct size. The size required will be the outside dimensions of the coffin or casket, including handles (see Container section, details below).

Religion of deceased - as a multi cultural society we need to know the religion of the deceased as it does enable us to anticipate the type and length of service and graveside requirements. This information is required 3 days prior to the burial service and can be completed on the 'Notice of Interment' form.

This completes the telephone arrangements and you must now proceed as follows:

Legal Requirements before a Burial Can Proceed

Registration of the Death - the death must be registered with the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages who will require a certificate of the cause of death issued by a Medical Practitioner (either from the local GP or from the Hospital). The Registrar will issue a certificate for burial (green disposal) that you must pass to us as soon as possible as without it, the funeral cannot take place.

The above certificates will not be issued in some cases i.e. cause of death not known, no medical attendant, accident, sudden death etc, which may result in the Coroner being involved. If this is the case then the Coroner will issue an alternative certificate (Coroner's Inquest Form), which again must be passed to us. In this instance, a post mortem may be required or other investigations, which may delay the funeral.

Notice of Burial - you must complete and sign a formal application to us for the burial this form is called "Notice of Interment". This can be obtained by post from us or at the Bereavement Services office. This form confirms your telephone booking and completes a binding contract over the funeral. It is required 3 working days before the funeral is due to arrive.

This will complete the legal requirements and you must now:

Consider the Funeral Arrangements

Container or Coffin - a traditional coffin, biodegradable coffin or alternative can be used for burial. The container must be interred with the body and it is not possible to remove the deceased from the container during the ceremony. The container must be environmentally acceptable and bio degradable without using lead, zinc or such metals during the construction. It is preferred that a nameplate or other form of identification is placed on the container. It must be noted that fluid can leak from the body, particularly when the funeral is delayed due to the Coroner's involvement or an inquest has been held. The use of plastic sheets and/or wadding can prevent or minimize this.

The container must be lowered into the grave when the burial takes place. We have graves of varying depths in our cemeteries. As it is neither safe nor sensible for anybody to enter the grave in order to help a body being lowered, tapes/webbing straps should be used for lowering from the gravesides. For traditional coffins and rigid containers, we have tapes available at the graveside to lower the container. For other types of containers, the method of lowering must be considered very carefully.

You need to provide sufficient bearers to carry the container and lower into the grave. The cemetery staff is unable to assist you in this task, although they can advise you on the safest method to use.

Conveyance - any form of suitable transport can be used to convey the body to the cemetery as well as a hearse. An estate car or van would seem suitable, depending upon how easy it is to slide the container in and out of the vehicle. It may be possible to hire a hearse from a local funeral director and do the remainder of the funeral yourself.

Service - You can devise your own service and deliver it yourself or, through a family member or friend. This can make the service a meaningful experience, which can be more personal and moving. The deceased may have composed the service with the family carrying out their wishes. If you ask a minister to officiate check he/she is happy with your wishes for the service.

Additional Information and Advice

Location - we have 2 cemeteries, for which we can provide a plan showing their location related to main roads. Please ask for a copy from the main office.

Fees - a list of fees can be requested which sets out Bereavement Services charges

The particular fees you need to consider are:

(I) Right of Burial - this gives the deed for the Exclusive Right of Burial for 50 years.

This in effect makes the grave private, allowing the grave owner the right to instruct the cemetery office as to who may be buried within the grave space. The Rights can be bought in advance by calling into the Cemetery Office to make the necessary arrangements. This is usually called 'reserving a grave space'.

(ii) Burial fee (interment fee) - this is for excavating and securing the side walls of the grave, dressing the surface with timber and grass mats, providing lowering tapes, re-filling the graves and leaving it neat and tidy with any flowers carefully placed over. A member of staff is included to supervise the burial.

(iii) Chapel - a fee is payable to use the chapel for a service. The chapel has various music choices upon request or you may use your own music. Please provide music 24 hours before the service takes place.

(iv) Erection of Memorials - a fee is charged for registering and recording the memorial in the statutory registers, checking the inscription and grave owner in the registers and ensuring the memorial is placed on the correct grave.

*Please note that all fees may be subject to an increase each year from 1st April. If you arrange a funeral directly with the cemetery offices only the fees mentioned above will be charged. These cover administration, registration and all other costs mentioned. The cost of the container, conveyance, flowers, obituaries etc. will be your responsibility.

All fees must be paid to the cemetery before the funeral takes place and are payable to 'St Helens Council'.

Disbursements

Flowers - you can provide your own funeral flowers i.e. rosemary for remembrance, dried flowers or garden flowers that are picked from your garden. Alternatively, you may use the services of a commercial florist.

Obituaries - if you require these in the local newspaper then you need to make these arrangements yourself or through your funeral director. Some newspapers, due to hoaxes do not accept telephone bookings and they may require you to call at their offices to make the bookings, supplying evidence of the death or they will check where the death was registered or with your funeral director.

Service - you may wish to devise your own funeral service with someone, either family or friends who will deliver it at the funeral.

Memorial Services

We hold an annual All Souls Service each November to remember our loved ones.

Our facilities are available for any religious or non-religious group to hold a Memorial Service. Please contact the office for further details.

Conclusion

For those who wish to consider in more detail the subject of funerals and making the right choices for a personalised funeral, the National Death Center offer a range of services and information that will be useful to you. Their address is 6 Blackstock Mews, Blackstock Road, London N4 2BT, telephone number 020 7359 8391 or visit www.naturaldeath.org.uk

Charter for the Bereaved

The Charter for the Bereaved was launched on 2nd September 1996 in London, by the Institute of Cemetery and Cremation Administration (ICCM). St Helens Council adopted the charter and all of the 33 rights specified in the Charter, on 1st March 2009. Copies of which are available upon request to assist you with your choice.

This leaflet is intended to offer guidance and is updated when new information is sourced. No responsibility can be accepted for the fact that these details cannot be correct in every case but we will try to give you accurate and up to date information whenever possible.

List of Useful Contact Numbers

Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages
Central Street, St Helens
Tel: 01744 677539

Bereavement Office
Whiston Hospital
Tel: 0151 430 1412